



**INAUGURATION
OF THE SEAT OF THE SECRETARIAT OF
THE
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE HEALTH
NETWORK (SEEHN)
SKOPJE, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
7 MARCH 2013**



Inauguration Speech: Minister of Health, Nikola Todorov

Your Excellencies,
Dear SEEHN members and partners,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished Guests,

It is an honor and the pleasure indeed, to host you today in historical and cultural cradle of the Republic of Macedonia, the National Museum.

I am pleased to welcome you all in Skopje today to mark together with you the Inauguration of the Seat of the SEE Health network Secretariat. Your presence motivates us to keep working towards new, successful anniversaries in the future as well.

The Network in the past decade clearly has shown that putting together great nations through health is excellent way of improving peace, stability and economic development.

The Network has become a meeting place of health policies in South East Europe integrating it with the European health policy, through the partners and friends of the Network.

I would like to pay tribute to our partners and supporters on the European health scene:

- The World Health Organization, for strong partnership and support that continues beyond the past 12 years, so that the Network has constantly international public health experts at its side. Special thanks to Mrs. Zsuzsanna Jakab for her visionary approach to public health partnerships and further support to the SEEHN.
- It is the same with the Council of Europe. Human rights approach has been present to full extent in all the activities of the Network, supported by the active partnership with the Council of Europe and Council of Europe Development Bank.
- European integration focus of the Network activities has invited European Commission aboard the Network, through the DG SANCO and DG Enlargement. The EU member states, on bilateral basis have been supporting the Network as well; in addition Norway, Switzerland and Slovenia were present and supportive.

- The EuroHealthNet and the Nordic Dimension Partnership in Public health and Social Wellbeing, for building with us alliance in public health across Europe.
- The International Organization for Migration and recently UNICEF, the International Network of Health promoting Hospitals and Health Services, Project “Hope” joined the international community on board the Network.

I would like to stress that the Network is all about the people and for the people, and to extend my tributes to all the individuals who helped the Network to come this long way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have achieved a lot:

- We have established a cooperative framework for countries in the region with the goal of promoting cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe,
- We have committed ourselves to work towards better health of the population in the region trough development of common projects, trough gaining equal level of expertise in different health areas and development of regional pool of experts.
- We are very proud of what has been achieved and although we still have work to do, we certainly have come a very long way.

SEEHN, indeed has become the primary vehicle for major regional public health initiatives in SEE. What it has achieved over the past 12 years will continue to bring better health and greater well being to the region, as well as undeniable social and economic benefits.

I know very well that you have come to the table with a diversity of views on public health system strengthening. Finding an agreed way forward is not easy. There are some strong economic dimensions as well as strong public health concerns, and many competing interests.

But the Network, I believe, is the right forum for these discussions and the right way to take our decisions forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to inform you that the Ministry of Health is particularly focused on the strengthening of human resources in health and to this end we have initiated major reform in educational system, which is contained in a separate law for medical studies and continuous professional training of medical doctors, that in the long term will allow Macedonia to get a completely different and functionally seriously improved health system following the example of most developed countries in the world.

Among the main novelties is that for the first time we are introducing the division of the medical preclinical studies and clinical part, as well as practical three-month training for hospital care through volunteer work, acquiring communicational skills of students for appropriate behavior towards patients and colleagues, mandatory online education of doctors, obligatory knowledge of English language and learning medical subjects in English, video recordings of all surgical interventions, the establishment of the Medical simulation center where the medical students will be trained, use of literature from the top 100 ranked universities from the Shanghai list etc.

Parallel to this, we are particularly focused on the professional education of health personnel in the public health institutions, namely on the implementation of specializations and professional training abroad. The main aim is to raise the level of professional knowledge and to improve the quality of health services in all levels of health care in everyday practice.

I want to mention another important reform in the pharmaceutical sector which already shows benefits for the patients. That is the introduction of a new methodology for determining prices for drugs, which resulted in reduced prices for a total of 1,636 drugs for different diseases – cardiovascular, respiratory, for treatment of epilepsy, osteoporosis, hormones etc.

At the same time, we are continuously working on the modernization of the medical equipment, namely the equipment of the latest technology and last product of the medical market, as well as complete reconstruction of the public health institutions, whose value exceeds 150 million euros.

In the final phase is the reconstruction of the most of the hospitals, as well as building a new health facilities (the construction of a new Clinical Center, the Hospital in Ohrid and Special hospital for children in Kozle). Currently, we are focused on the reconstruction of Health centers as one of the larger reform, which will greatly affect the improvement of the conditions for the treatment of the patients, and of course to improve the infrastructural conditions for doctors and other medical staff.

Also, many other projects are underway in order to improve the health system in the country, such as the introduction of national electronic system for scheduling patients and interventions in the health care system in Macedonia. It is a very advanced system, one of the few in the wider region, which offers a comprehensive opportunity to schedule from primary to tertiary level of health care.

Moreover, the implementation of an electronic system for recording health information is ongoing as well, by which we have completed the implementation of the Integrated Health Information System (IHIS). This will enable a better approach to the treatment of patients, and the electronic data are vital for the creation of health policy and health system research work.

By mentioning all these activities I open another platform for new areas and initiatives for cooperation within the Network.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are at the start of the new era of the Network. I ensure you that the Network will continue to operate stable and prosperous under the new Seat of the Secretariat in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Operational activities have been successfully accomplished. I do thank all the member states and partners for the efforts to this end. That is why, this event is a major breakthrough and milestone on the SEE Health Network history and development.

So, what is it that you can expect from the new SEE Health Network Secretariat in the future?

I ensure you that the Seat of the SEE Health Network Secretariat will start working in line with the signed Memorandum of Understanding and host Agreement, and will continue with the activities that have been taken so far by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. By saying this I mean, to provide continuous administrative and technical support in the very important SEEHN initiative – to improve public health and to promote reconciliation and stability in the region through regional cooperation and synergy. The Secretariat will manage overall activities of the Network, including the work of the project offices and the Regional Health development Centers. The new Secretariat will be backbone and foundation for sustaining the SEE Health Network and the exemplary regional cooperation for public health, peace and economic development in this region of Europe.

I am positive that you will use this event to elaborate on successes, but also on challenges to our future sub regional cooperation in health through the SEE Health Network, especially in the light of:

- new arrangements regarding the Seat of the Secretariat
- upcoming Ministerial Conferences
- financial and other commitments of the member states,
- state of art with the Regional Health Development Centers and
- strengthening partnerships.

Dear All,

I express my sincere gratitude to all of you in helping us advance the MoH mission of promoting mutual cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe in order to inspire development in the region to the benefit of its people.

I thank all of you for the support given in making it possible for officials and experts from countries in the region to meet and discuss subjects of common interest and define joint regional cooperation goals under this framework of the SEEHN.

I hope that in the course of my mandate the Seat of SEE Secretariat will continue to advance vigorously cooperation in South East Europe, and in this I ask for your support.

Thank you!